

Good Morning,....Buenos Dias!!

It is my pleasure to be here today on behalf of my pharmacy colleagues, my association, the American Pharmacists Association (APhA) and the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy. Pharmacists play an important role in helping patients, particularly seniors, use their medications effectively and safely.

It is remarkable that in this country on an average seniors use between 5-6 prescription medications. Based on my own personal experience, I have seen seniors use 10-15 different medications. Can you imagine the burden of managing these medications- knowing how to take them, when to take them, which one to take with a meal or an empty stomach, what OTC medications to use with their prescription medications ...

If we add to this the 100,000 products that are available without a prescription, over the counter, many of which contain active ingredients that once were found in a prescription medication, then the issue becomes more complicated.

The good news is that there is a health care provider who is accessible and educated to help patients manage their drug therapy effectively. This health care provider is The Pharmacist. The pharmacist is one of the most trusted health care providers, he/she is available on many cases 24 hours a day, and is the medication expert. Pharmacists are Medication Experts! Did you know that pharmacists have 6 years of education; they receive formalized education on medications (prescription and over the counter) and the treatment of diseases. Pharmacists all over the nation have proven that when they work in collaboration with other health care providers, especially the physician, we can improve patients' symptoms and their quality of life.

So, I invite you to let the pharmacist be a partner in your care, by helping you manage your medications and teach you important information related to your medications such as:

- a. when to take your medicines- when is the best time to take your medicines
- b. how to take your medications
- c. which are the most common side effects of the medications and what to do if they occur
- d. what other medications over the counter can you take
- e. for how long should you take your medications
- f. where should you stored your medications

Pharmacists can assist you in selecting over the counter products, helping you decide what product to use and when is safe to take a specific product with your current medical conditions. Did you know that there are over the counter and herbal products that a person with diabetes or hypertension should not take? Ask the pharmacist to help you make the right choice for you!

Today we have important informational brochures from the American Pharmacists Association and the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy Peter Lamy Geriatric Center to help you learn more about medications and the role of the pharmacist. Get a brochure at the Information Table. We also have pharmacists and pharmacy students who will be at your table to answer any questions related to your medications that you might have.

In summary it is important that you take the following steps to maximize the use/benefit of your medications and decrease the risk for side effects. They are the following:

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- a. keep a list of all the medications (OTC and prescription) that you are taking- share the list with all the health care providers taking care of you
- b. always ask questions related to your medications-what is this medication for?, how much should I take?, what are the side effects associated with this medication?, what should I do if I develop an adverse reaction?
- c. partner with your pharmacist to help you manage your treatment- *Ask the Pharmacist* –ask to meet with your pharmacist to review your medications and how to use them safely
- d. when in doubt, ask you pharmacist or physician what OTC products or herbal product is safe for you to take with your current prescription medications and with your current medical conditions
- e. always read the label- read the instructions in your prescription medications and the label in the OTC products
- f. do not assume that more is better- always take the quantity indicated in the label- Take as prescribed!

In summary, do not be afraid to ask! *Ask your Pharmacist!* We are never too busy for you! Our goal is the safety and well being of our patients. Let the pharmacist be your partner to a better health!

Thank you- Gracias!